

MARKETING

## Which skills and talent will be in most demand in luxury post-COVID-19?

April 23, 2020



*A recent Gucci Instagram post starring @sokothecat promotes family time. Image credit: Gucci*

---

By DIANNA DILWORTH

When the world begins to open up after the coronavirus pandemic, luxury brands will have to adapt to a new order where digital will bridge the divide with bricks-and-mortar.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

As companies look to find the way forward, they may be looking for new skillsets among employees to support changing customer needs.

"The workplace has no choice but to embrace, be flexible and execute a reset in every area of their business, not only to survive but to create a new experience for their core customers and prospects readying for the new norm," said Rebecca Miller, principal at Miller&company, New York.



*A recent Neiman Marcus Instagram post promotes dining at home and virtual happy hours. Image credit: Neiman Marcus*

## Digital skillsets

Some luxury brands are already adapting their internal creative teams for this pandemic. The most forward-thinking ones are also producing content to relaunch brands and product messaging when conditions stabilize.

"Customer acquisition is currently taking a back seat to supporting current customers as brands look to weather the downturn," said Brian Lee, senior principal at Gartner, New York.

"As COVID-19 hopefully winds down, we expect brands to continue already heightened social listening and maintain elevated customer service protocols in order to prevent costly missteps and pivot brand and marketing messages to meet a consumer whose values have likely shifted due to current conditions," he said.

The importance of digital has accelerated for many brands as they realize the new reality.

Digital commerce was already a top 3 priority for CMOs, according to Gartner's 2019 CMO, and COVID-19 is amplifying this adaptation.

With consumers likely to order more online and marketing budgets getting cut, companies will be looking to build better digital experiences while maintaining greater cost efficiencies.

"This is where marketing opportunities come in," Mr. Lee said.

"These roles have already been growing in importance due to increasing complexity in marketing," he said. "As CMOs look to balance budgets and keep things running smoothly despite less available resources, these roles will increase in importance."

Building relationships with customers will take on more urgency throughout and after the crisis, according to recent research from Gartner.

"CMOs and their teams should be identifying lasting customer behaviors that will impact their business and planning now how to position their brand to be agile and ready to deliver when things return to normal," Mr. Lee said.

"Marc Jacobs and Gucci are finding opportunities to push digital experience innovations that were previously seen as nice to have' improvements," he said.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Marc Jacobs created the Bookmarc Presents author discussion between Author @StephanieLaCava and @KaiaGeber to entertain customers in lockdown.

A post shared by Marc Jacobs (@marcjacobs) on Apr 18, 2020 at 8:45am PDT

#### In-demand skills

In-demand skills will likely include video and media production, virtual event planning, social media marketing and commerce, content marketing and search engine optimization, digital merchandising and partner/channel management.

Many of these jobs will be managed remotely, so the ability to manage well in work-from-home situations will also be important.

Additionally, luxury marketers will also likely emphasize the ability to use data and analytics tools to understand emerging consumer trends, and adapt accordingly.

"Skillsets will include more savvy knowledge and use of all forms of technology beginning with development extending to sales and marketing tools to the customer's ease of use," Ms. Miller said.

"Companies will, or should be, looking for employees or consultants who can lead, drive and instill these skillsets," she said. "Employees who wish to be more valuable will work to gain these skills.

"Success has always been awarded to those who show up differently, as it relates to their dedication to evolving and whose capabilities extend beyond corporate standards. It is important to understand that being in control of your future means investing in one's self."



*Nordstrom honors medical workers in Instagram post. Image credit: Nordstrom*

### Future shopping

Store safety and hygiene is of moderate-to-high importance to all generations of shoppers, per data from Gartner's Consumer Community Panel.

"Brands that fail to address this, and make the requisite changes to store layout, design and cleanliness will be unlikely to win in-store visits when stay-at-home orders are lifted," Mr. Lee said.

Grocery stores and large-format retailers are giving a hint at what retail may look like in the near future, and luxury retail will likely follow suit.

Expect less inventory on display and fewer display cases on the store floor to accommodate social distancing protocols as stores slowly re-open.

Additionally, there will likely be more signage promoting safe distance expectations and an increase in-store and merchandise cleaning.

"Instead of the glass of Champagne, think complimentary hand sanitizer, latex gloves to handle product," Mr. Lee said.

Retail stores will be expecting soft skills in stores to help boost shopper confidence.

"Technology will continue to play a significant role in the workplace, but will never completely replace human interaction, be it in person, online or via the phone," Ms. Miller said.

"Lest we not forget that humans are by nature very tactile," she said. "We employ our senses in most everything we do and therefore a brand or product must provide these same opportunities for their customer's satisfaction."

As more attention is given to digital experience, companies should also seek ways to better blend digital and physical worlds.

"This will push companies to achieve greater consistency in brand standards, voice and messaging, and experience across both digital and physical retail worlds," Mr. Lee said.